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# "An Automaton of Duty"? Some Remarks on Nietzsche's Kant-Critique

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Friedrich Nietzsche belongs to the sharpest opponents of Kant's practical philosophy. From his naturalistic perspective he subjects Kant to an uncompromising, gradually sharpening critique. The paper concentrates on selected aspects of this critique and asks a simple question, namely whether Nietzsche's direct anti-Kantian passages contribute anything relevant to a substantive discussion of the core of Kant's practical philosophy. Therefore, the interpretation focuses on Nietzsche's direct references to selected motifs of Kant's ethics with the aim of identifying the substantive core hidden behind the rhetorical expressions. This core refers to the four motifs that structure the interpretation: 1. duty, 2. imperative, 3. autonomy, and 4. the intelligible world. I argue for a negative answer to the main question, but at the same time I try to show not only a specific proximity of the two concepts of autonomy but also the possibility of understanding Nietzsche's "autonomy of the body" as a continuous extension of the autonomy of pure will.

**Keywords**: Kant – Nietzsche – duty – imperative – autonomy

## Introduction

The recent commemorations of Kantian and (less important, the 180th) Nietzschean anniversaries may provide an appropriate occasion to ask a simple question: What lies at the core of Nietzsche's critique of Kant? As with other topics, criticism of Kant's philosophy is scattered throughout Nietzsche's

writing,[1] from chapter 18 of *The Birth of Tragedy* to the last notes of *Nachlass* (*KSA* 13, 25[7]). Interestingly, however, it is not until the 1880s that Nietzsche focuses almost exclusively to ethics and practical philosophy, which are discussed here.[2] The critique of Kant's ethics takes its sharpest form in a writing that Nietzsche did not manage to publish, namely chapter 11 of *The Antichrist*. Here we find, among others, the phrase "an automaton of duty," ironically denoting the harmful, unreflected, uniform character of Kant's ethics and which inspires the following lines. My aim is neither to make a general comparison between the two philosophers nor to resolve the dispute that Nietzsche had with Kant throughout all of his creative life, and which has also been richly thematized by scholars, but to present the core of this dispute and to highlight some of its inspirational moments.[3] These include, first of all, the negatively refuting emphasis in the foundation of ethics and personal autonomy as the basis of self-respect and duty in both protagonists.

A similar goal may resemble an attempt to make Nietzsche a Kantian.[4] The following interpretation is not trying to refute Nietzsche's therapeutic, biologizing, anti-essentialist naturalism with Kant's transcendental idealism.[5] I accept the plain fact that the two philosophies are fundamentally different, and their authors ask different questions from different directions. Kant works on "finding and establishing the highest principle of morality" (Kant 1999, *AA* IV, 392) and because morality entails responsibility, and this presupposes a free agent to whom certain actions can be attributed, he tries hard to demonstrate the compatibility of natural determinism and freedom in a strong, transcendental sense. Nietzsche, on the other hand, shows how morality, with

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[1] Nietzsche's works are cited with the following standard English-language abbreviations followed by section numbers: *A*: *The Antichrist*, *BGE*: *Beyond Good and Evil*, *D*: *Daybreak*, *EH*: *Ecce Homo*, *GM*: *Genealogy of Morality*, *GS*: *Gay Science*, *KSA*: *Sämtliche Werke*, *KSB*: *Sämtliche Briefe*, *TI*: *Twilight of the Idols*, *Z*: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Kant's works are cited with the pagination of the well-known Academy Edition (*AA*).

[2] See Bailey (2013, 147).

[3] For a comprehensive view of the Kant-Nietzsche interface see Himmelmann (2005); here especially Risse (2005, 143 – 151), and Barbera (2005, 130 – 142). For recent contributions on the ethical interface between Kant and Nietzsche, see Risse (2007, 57 – 81) and Bailey (2013, 134 – 159).

[4] On the attempt to place Nietzsche in Kant's "long shadow" and to argue in favour of the thesis that Nietzsche is more fundamentally influenced by Kant than is generally acknowledged, see Hill (2003).

[5] On Nietzsche's strong inspiration from physiology and evolutionary biology in the second half of the 19th century see Moore (2002).

its key concepts, has evolved from natural, immoral, ultimately physiological presuppositions. Further, he shows the ways in which it blocks the free rise of the individual, and the corrosive, nihilistic consequences it brings to late nineteenth-century society. He rejects the unconditionally moral status of what Kant seeks to establish, as well as the idea of the noumenal world of which Kant believes man is a part. From his naturalistic perspective he subjects Kant to an uncompromising, gradually sharpening critique where the latter has no chance to defend himself. Therefore, the following interpretation focuses on Nietzsche's direct references to selected motifs of Kant's practical philosophy with the aim to identify the substantive core hidden behind the rhetorical expressions. This core relates to the four motifs that structure the following interpretation: 1. duty, 2. imperative, 3. autonomy, and 4. the intelligible world. The overarching question can be formulated as follows: does Nietzsche with his direct criticism contribute anything relevant to the substantial discussion of Kant's practical philosophy?[6]

**I. Corrupting Duty**

The book *The Antichrist* was supposed to be the first part of a planned four-part project called "Revaluation of All Values," but was later seen as its realisation.[7] Nietzsche finalized the work during his last stay at Sils Maria during the summer of 1888.[8] As is generally known, the text is characterized by one-sidedness and radicalism, which makes it quite different from previous, especially middle texts, in which the reader encounters patient micro-phenomenology and a subtle, subverted dialectic, excavating innumerable "molehills" beneath the "majestic building of morality" (*D*, Preface). Nor do we encounter Zarathustra's enigmatic symbolism and double glow. Given the at times primitive one-sidedness, the question is whether this is a philosophical

[6] As for Nietzsche's actual Kant reading, scholars cite Kuno Fischer's two-volume commentary with key excerpts from Kant's main texts as a primary source of instruction (Fischer 1861). See Brobjer (2003, 39 – 83).

[7] Nietzsche's resignation to the four-part project of revaluation of all values and its identification with *The Antichrist* can be dated to the end of November 1888. See *KSB* 8, 482. On the origin of the text see Urs Sommer (2013, 3 – 8).

[8] The work was ready for print on 30 September 1888, with intention to be published in 1890. This was delayed until 1895. See Urs Sommer (2013, 5 – 7).

text at all.[9] However, in its defence, it should be noted that it is the culmination of a long philosophical development (where *GM* plays a key role), without which it is difficult to understand. What makes this book challenging is its status as the "visible part of the iceberg," where the strong concentration of the ideas that had been developing and maturing for a long time is carried by an almost "manic" energy.[10] Their goal is a final reckoning with Christianity, and thus a final reckoning with Kant – for he too holds Christian moral interpretation of the world.

To recall the basic thesis of the book, Christianity is a decadent movement corrupting life understood as a will to power. Through theologians it also corrupts philosophy, and the starkest example of theological corruption of philosophy is – Immanuel Kant. Let us quote in full Nietzsche's accusation from *A*, 11:

> One more word against Kant as *a moralist*. A virtue needs to be our *own* invention, our *own* most personal need and self-defence: in any other sense, a virtue is just dangerous. Whatever is not a condition for life *harms* it: a virtue that comes exclusively from a feeling of respect for the concept of 'virtue,' as Kant would have it, is harmful. 'Virtue,' 'duty,' 'goodness in itself,' goodness that has been stamped with the character of the impersonal and universally valid – these are fantasies and manifestations of decline, of the final exhaustion of life, of the Konigsberg Chinesianity. The most basic laws of preservation and growth require the opposite: that everyone should invent his *own* virtues, his *own* categorical imperatives. A people is destroyed when it confuses its own duty with the concept of duty in general. Nothing ruins us more profoundly or inwardly than 'impersonal' duty, or any sacrifice in front of the Moloch of abstraction. – To think that people did not sense the *mortal danger* posed by Kant's categorical imperative! … The theologian instinct was the only thing that came to its defence! – When the instinct of life compels us to act, pleasure [Lust] proves that the act is *right*: and this nihilist with the intestines of a Christian dogmatist saw pleasure [Lust] as an *objection* … What could be more destructive than working,

[9] The reception of the book was marked by suspicions about the sanity of its author, which have now rather subsided. See Ridley 2005. Nietzsche's sister tried to defend the status of the writing this way: "I believe that, if it had been written in a calmer state of mind, its content would have been more in line with the manner of expression in *Beyond Good and Evil*." Förster-Nietzsche (1922, 497).

[10] As readers know, in *EH*, 'Wise', 7, the tone is different: "To attack is for me a sign of favour, or even gratitude."

> thinking, feeling, without any inner need, any deeply personal choice, any *pleasure* [Lust]? as an automaton of 'duty'? It is almost the *recipe* for decadence, even for idiocy ... Kant became an idiot. – And this was a contemporary of *Goethe*! (*A*, 11)

In this striking, concentrated formulations we see both a critique of Kant's understanding of morality and the basic contours of Nietzsche's ethics, or rather what lies at its centre, virtue. The morality of universal duty is an unnatural, decadent, artificial construct, a dead end for the path of authentic self-realization in the name of an empty "Sollen." In contrast, Nietzsche's approach understands virtue as the authentic expression of a unique bodily existence; to act according to virtue is to act in accord with one's own unique nature, to act *from* that nature. Vital authenticity stands in opposition to toxic morality.

Kant's categorical imperative is an expression of "Chinese automaton of duty," for it has a uniforming and thus paralyzing effect.[11] In the same vein speaks highly illustrative aphorism *GS*, 335 entitled "Long Live Physics!":

> What? You admire the categorical imperative in yourself? The 'firmness' of your so-called moral judgment? This 'unconditionality' of the feeling that 'here everyone must judge as I do'? Rather admire your *selfishness* here! And the blindness, pettiness and simplicity of your selfishness! For it is selfishness to consider one's own judgment a universal law, and this selfishness is blind, petty, and simple because it shows that you have not yet discovered yourself or created for yourself an ideal of your very own – for this could never be the ideal of anyone else, let alone of everyone, everyone! No one who judges, 'this is the way everyone should act in this case' has yet taken five steps towards self-knowledge. … We, however, *want to become who we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves! (*GS*, 335)

Against this unoriginal[12] criticism it must be argued that the categorical imperative does not lead to equality of *action* as it is only a criterion for certain maxims to "qualify" as morally proper. The moral law, as formulated by Kant, is a formal, self-distributive criterion: it says that one ought to act according to such principles that one can at the same time *will as a law* – it says nothing else. It does not tell man what to do and when, what to engage in and what not to engage in; it merely formulates the ultimate *criterion of the acceptability* of one's

[11] On the motif of "Chineseness" as mediocrity see *GS*, 377 and *BGE*, 210.

[12] A critique of the absolute and abstract "Sollen" is already found, for example, in Schopenhauer (2019, 128 – 134).

principle of willing. For the basic premise is: "We must be *able to will* that the maxims of our conduct could become general law: this is the very canon of moral judgment" (Kant 1999, *AA* IV, 425).

Responsibility is here, as it were, returned to the shoulders of the actor, and what is more: it is underlined by the autonomous "being able to will." The actor himself must be able to will, and this responsibility cannot be shifted to anything else, be it "on heaven or on earth" (Kant 1999, *AA* IV, 425). It is clear that this principle of autonomy does, so to speak, point in one direction for different actors in given morally relevant situations, just as the needles of various compasses point to the same pole. A person accepting the moral law, for example, will not engage in thinking and acting in ways that suppress personal autonomy of others. However, this "sameness" of principle *does not imply sameness of action*, so the objection of "mindless automaton" and "Chinesianity" is unjustified. It would be the same as saying that those who accept the same physical principle perform the same acts only because of these principles (e.g. accepting the same principle of combustion should lead to production of the same cars).

Kant's imperative is meant to serve as a simple compass, not an electronic navigation dictating every movement of the actor.[13] Nevertheless, as some know, the correct use of compass requires a set of non-trivial skills; it depends on a solid orientation in the landscape, an awareness of one's own situatedness in relation to certain spatial objects, and, above all, the will to get somewhere at all. The compass alone does not show which way to go, its use presupposes, as Kant simply puts it, "ability of judgment sharpened by experience" (Kant 1999, *AA* IV, 389), so Nietzsche's comparison to an "automaton of duty" is incorrect. In addition, he himself defines himself with irony against the motif of the automaton ("the freedom of the mechanical spit").[14]

Kant's moral ideal is the exact opposite, for it is the demanding standpoint of the will which is in full control of its maxims and realizes from them only those which it can fully, completely accept. Nietzsche's criticism is useful, however, in that it shows the dangers of a mindless, unreflective relationship

[13] On the compass motif see Kant (1999; *AA* IV, 404). As for other occurrences, see Kant (2012; *AA* VIII, 26): "Pure rational faith is thus the signpost or compass by means of which the speculative thinker can orient himself in his wanderings in the field of supersensible objects."
[14] "And if the freedom of our will were no other than the last (i.e., psychological and comparative, not transcendental, i.e. at the same time absolute), then it would be no better than the freedom of a mechanical spit, which also, once stretched, performs its movements out of itself" Kant (2003; *AA* V, 97).

to authority, which can be virtually anything and anyone. It is evident that blinded duty can take many forms with various, often tragic, consequences.

Moreover, if we take the word "Chinesianity" in the narrower, actual political sense and not merely as a metaphor for averaging and mediocrity, it should be reminded that few ethics are as "anti-Chinese" as Kant's. What is more, Kant and Nietzsche become unquestionable allies in this perspective. One need only recall familiar facts such as the universal character of human dignity and, with it, of human rights. The unquestionable character of personal autonomy as a supreme value is for Kant also the basis of the rule of law, which is an undeniable feature of a free community. To use Kant's metaphor of concentric circles from his *Religionsschrift* (Kant 2017; *AA* VI, 12), we can figuratively speak of an inner circle of autonomous morality and an outer circle of political autonomy, with the space of personal autonomy as the centre. Only autonomized persons can form a mature community in which there is no room for any form of despotism since these persons freely submit to the common law.[15]

**II. Discover Your Imperative**

In the quoted section *A*, 11 (and in other places like *BGE*, 188; *BGE*, 211) Nietzsche emphasizes the imperative character of his morality: "Virtue must be *our* invention…," "the deepest laws of preservation and growth command… that everyone should invent *his* virtue, *his* categorical imperative." Nietzsche thus articulates *the universal* obligation to follow one's *own* law and puts it against Kantian universal law.[16] However, he imposes it as a general principle, as something to be followed by everyone, which means that, like Kant, he

[15] On the relationship between personal and political autonomy, see e.g. the conclusion of *What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thought?*: "if reason does not subject itself to the laws which it gives itself, it will have to bow under the yoke of the laws which someone else gives it" Kant (2012; *AA* VIII, 145).

[16] Some commentators might argue that Nietzsche's emphasis in *A* 11, as well as in other later texts, is basically "collective," not "personal," aiming at "*Volk*." While I agree with a collective emphasis in later Nietzsche, especially in connection with nihilism, this, in my reading, cannot eliminate personal focus of "becoming what you are." This "you" is basically specific bodily personal being. Cf. the "casuistry of selfishness" in *EH*, marked by the question "*wie hast gerade du dich zu ernähren, um zu deinem Maximum von Kraft, von Virtu im Renaissance-Stile, von moralinfreier Tugend zu kommen?*" (*EH*, clever, 1). Similarly, in *A* 11we read that a virtue (Tugend) must be "unsre *Erfindung…*, unsre *persönlichste Nothwehr und Nothdurf*." A "collective" reading does not make sense here; on the contrary, Nietzsche warns against "*Unpersönlichkeit*," this being equivalent to "*Allgemeingültigkeit*."

connects general and personal legislation. The difference is that Kant underlines the linking of the general and the personal, which can be seen his philosophical thesis,[17] whereas Nietzsche tries to disconnect them without being able to avoid raising some form of general claim. If he formulates the general appeal "realize yourself"/"become what you are," he is positing a universal law, which has its consequences that need to be taken as seriously as that law: he must at the same time accept the sentence "act so that each other may realize herself," thereby accepting the Kantian principle of respect that forbids treating the other as a mere means to one's ends. In my opinion it is difficult to defend the thesis that this imperative should only apply to "noble," "powerful," or "aristocratic" individuals, as Nietzsche suggests with his numerous hierarchical considerations (*BGE*, 259 – 261; *GM* I). This need of general respectfulness that in my reading is a "natural" consequence of what Nietzsche says does not imply the obligation to *positively promote* self-legislation of others: I would read it as a primarily negative obligation to avoid paralysing one's ability of self-legislation. In this case, the metaphor of a sports competition might be helpful: the mutual competition of individuals is conditioned by a common will to respect the rules of the game, without which the sporting event is impossible.

Further, if he says that everyone must invent his own categorical imperative, he does not simply mean that everyone should do whatever comes to mind for that would not amount to "imperative" or "virtue." In the chaotic domain of instincts, in the multiplicity of inner life, a kind of "imperative order" *is supposed to reign*. Many passages testify to the fact that the principle of this "imperative order" is the "growth of power" (*A* 2; *KSA*, 13, 14[80]; *KSA*, 13, 14[81]; *KSA*, 13, 14[101]; *KSA*, 13, 14[121]). At the same time, the unsatisfying nature of Nietzsche's undifferentiated use of the term "power" is evident. What criterion makes it possible to distinguish hierarchically between different kinds of power?

**III. The Natural History of Autonomy**

So far, it turns out that Nietzsche's direct criticism of Kant is not convincing in itself, and furthermore, that the motif of autonomy makes Nietzsche a closer ally with Kant than he pleases. This holds true despite the intrinsic difference of this motif. Whereas Kantian autonomy takes its direction "from above,"

[17] "… no one has thought that he is subject *only to his own*, and yet *general, legislation*" Kant (1999; *AA* IV, 432).

from the "self-consciousness of pure practical reason" (Kant 2003; *AA* V, 29) that makes the actor aware that he is to act so that his maxims can become general law, Nietzschean autonomy is directed "from below," as an expression of the body as a singular living power centre. Instantiated pure rationality stands against instantiated will to power. To the extent that the two types of autonomy are cultivated, they approach each other without being able to merge into some undifferentiated unity. Nevertheless, from a Kantian perspective, there is nothing to prevent understanding the autonomy of the body as a continuous extension of the autonomy of pure practical reason, again along the lines of the two concentric circles.

The common emphasis on autonomy is suggested by a rather familiar phrase from the second part of the *Genealogy of Morals*, namely that "the autonomous and the moral are mutually exclusive" (*GM*, II.2). In advocating the standpoint of autonomy, Nietzsche distances himself from morality in the sense of a collectively normative "morality of morals" ("*Sittlichkeit der Sitten*"), which is also a Kantian emphasis – or, at least, an analogy to his effort. For him, too, there is a sharp distinction between the autonomous and the "moral" in the sense of unreflected, inherited moral heteronomy, working as an "automaton of duty." This too can be interpreted in Nietzschean terms of habituality, convention, social pressure etc. For both, this habitual morality needs to be overcome and for this reason it represents a necessary condition for the "emergence" of authentic moral autonomy. At the same time, it is not advisable to bring the two positions together to the point where the tension between them subsides. Nietzsche's description of the sovereign individual in *GM*, II is an expression of his specific view of key moral phenomena such as guilt and bad conscience. This view is an ironic blend of physiology and mythology, Nietzsche tells his readers a "monstrous" story of the domestication of the "human animal" and the birth of these phenomena in a gradually expanding interior space. The key role belongs to the power strife of instincts, their overcoming, amplification and repression. In short, moral phenomena arise as the results of the strife of instinctive power "quanta" and, for example, a bad conscience is the instinct of freedom that clashes with a more powerful obstacle in the form of social pressure and therefore releases its energy inward.[18]

[18] "This *instinct of freedom*, forcibly pushed into latency, this repressed, retreating, inwardly imprisoned, and finally only in itself still discharging and raging instinct of freedom: this, only this, is in its beginnings *a bad conscience*" (*GM*, II.17).

The "free sovereign" depicted in *GM*, II.2, endowed with the "long will," responsibility and the ability to make and keep a promise, is seen in this context as the result of an extremely long development, for which he is "not to blame"; it is a purely "natural formation." If Nietzsche writes of him that he is a being "again free from morality, autonomous and transcending morality, a man of independent long will, who is *allowed* to promise, … a master of *free* will and a sovereign," in whom there is "a proud knowledge of the extraordinary privilege *of responsibility*, a consciousness of precious freedom, of power over oneself and over destiny" (*GM*, II.2), this certainly sounds Kantian. But this constellation is described as the result of extremely long natural development whose actors are unspecified "instincts" understood as cases of concretization of the will to power; if the sovereign individual is first and foremost a being of conscience, it needs to be stressed that this conscience, again, is nothing else than his dominant instinct.[19]

The story of its drastic, powerful emergence is the main theme of *GM*, II and it is obvious that it is an ambivalent, in a sense perverse and decadent movement, still waiting for its successful outcome, its redeemer, its Zarathustra (*GM*, II.24). The word "freedom," repeated five times in the depiction of the autonomous "sovereign" has the meaning of power and domination of one instinct over others; it is a freedom of overpowering forces, not an independence from natural motives, as in Kant. It is therefore necessary to keep in mind the fundamental gap between Nietzschean and Kantian autonomy – a gap that is narrow but difficult to bridge. This gap – this much seems evident with what Nietzsche says about autonomy in *GM*, II – does not allow us to speak of a "Kantian foundation of Nietzsche's thought."[20] Nor does it allow for any systematic improvements of the basic structure of Kant's ethics. At the same time, however, it does not exclude the accommodation of

[19] Kant's relevance for Nietzsche is rather exaggerated by Hill (2003, 36), who tries to show that each of the three treatises of *GM* is to be "derived from a confrontation with some aspect of Kant's ethics" and who is convinced that "Nietzsche does not reject Kant's account of the moral agent." Strictly naturalistic reading of this passage is offered by Leiter (2011, 101 – 119), who reads the words about the "autonomous sovereign individual" in a satirical tone, i.e. as a kind of parody of the traditional understanding of the free individual, with support in *TI*, "The Four Great Delusions." In my view, the satirical and provocative aspect should be taken as inseparable from the whole *GM* – also, against Leiter, from the whole strategy of "natural history," which includes strange one-sidedness of the origin of *agape* in *GM*, I.

[20] For this reason, the autonomy thus depicted cannot be regarded as an internal refinement of Kantian autonomy, as Bailey (2013) attempts.

Nietzsche's bodily emphasis into the Kantian perspective. The opposite direction does not seem possible.

**IV. The Intelligible World**

Nietzsche adopts and radicalizes Kantian thesis concerning the limited application of categories to the realm of phenomena (see e.g. *BGE*, 21). It is for this reason that determinism cannot be the last ontological word for Nietzsche, as naturalist interpretations (like that of Leiter, 2009) try to show.[21] "Naturalism," instead of being an exhaustive explanation of what the world as such is, would serve as an effective *tool for liberation* of human relation to the world into the form of supreme, loving acceptance (*BGE*, 56; *TI*, 'Four Great Errors,' 8; *GS*, 276; *EH*, 'Clever,' 10; *Z*, III, 'Seven Seals'). The strict demarcation against Kant is thus blunted again. Just as Kant, in his logic of knowledge, sharply distinguishes between knowing and mere thinking, so Nietzsche distinguishes between explanation of the world and mere description as verbal re-labelling. This is why Nietzsche is not so far from Kant's postulation of an inaccessible sphere – the "intelligible world" (see *BGE*, 36), which he criticizes in the new preface to *Daybreak:*

> To employ once again the innocent language of Kant, who describes his own 'not so glittering yet not undeserving' task and labour as 'to level and make firm the ground for these majestic moral structures' … To create room for his 'moral realm' he saw himself obliged to posit an undemonstrable world, a logical 'Beyond' – it was for precisely that that he had need of his critique of pure reason! In other words: he *would not have had need of it* if one thing had not been more vital to him than anything else: to render the 'moral realm' unassailable, even better incomprehensible to reason – for he felt that a moral order of things was only too assailable by reason! In the face of nature and history, in the face of the thorough *immorality* of nature and history, Kant was, like every good German of the old stamp, a pessimist; he believed in morality, not because it is demonstrated in nature and history, but in spite of the fact that nature and history continually refute it (*D*, Preface, 3).

As preceding passages, nor can this one be taken as a substantive critique of Kant's philosophy. With rhetorical bravura and typically psychologizing diagnosis, Kant is used to illustrate the fundamental temptation to which all Western philosophy has succumbed since Plato. Kant too suffers from a moral

[21] For a recent discussion of the paradox of "determinist self-fashioning" see Čukljević (2024).

blindness, hence the uncritical nature of his critical enterprise concerning the very status of morality. Nietzsche puts himself as an antithesis to Kant, rejecting the moral division of the world in the name of intellectual honesty.

What should suffice is to point out that the noumenal realm was not "founded" in order to have a place to "hide" the moral order of the world; its theoretical determination in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is, contrary to Kant's pre-critical period, purely negative, serving as a borderline demarcating a valid, legitimate area of our knowledge (Kant 1998, B 294 – B 315). The positive "saturation" of the noumenal world in the *Critique of Practical Reason* has its starting point in the demonstration of the moral law and the possibility of its free realization. If we know anything of the noumenal world, it is only our own freedom (which is the capacity to overcome the "nature" in us), and even that is known on the basis of a consciousness of the unconditional command that challenges all privately utilitarian motivations (Kant 2003, *AA* V, 106). The negative emphasis is thus inherent in the idea of the noumenal world as well as in Kant's foundation of the moral law, which is based on the unjustifiability of the claim of empirical motives to become the supreme determining ground of the will. In this refutation Kant proceeds by way of elementary conceptual definitions and their consequences, hence "rationally." If he defends his standpoint against anything, it is, on the one hand, the irrationality of a purely private empiricism, and, on the other, of a supra-rational and other-worldly spiritual "delirium" ("Schwärmerei"; Kant 2003, *AA* V, 86, 162).

**Conclusion**

In his belief in an authentic "counter-morality," the morality that "nature and history continually refute," which is supposed to be possible despite "herd" sociality, Nietzsche follows in Kant's footsteps, or better, in the Kantian direction. If he refuses to postulate a noumenal world, he at the same time refuses to reduce the world to a domain that could be explained with scientific optics. The common antithesis for both, then, is scientific rationality that uncritically absolutizes its starting point and takes its descriptions as the ultimate explanation of what the world is. Nevertheless – here too they are allies – this does not prevent them from receiving crucial impulses for philosophy from the scientific rationality of their time. Autonomy and negativity can be seen as two common aspects of both thinkers, creating an ever new – and for both authors beautiful – space of freedom.

To return to the initial question, namely whether Nietzsche's direct anti-Kantian passages contribute anything relevant to a substantive discussion of

Kant's practical philosophy, I am afraid this must be answered in the negative. Nietzsche's direct critique of Kant is neither original nor, taken by itself, has the potential to defeat Kantianism. At the same time, however, it seems evident that Nietzsche's thought has the potential to enrich the Kantian transcendental perspective. The passages discussed above can serve as effective prevention against the risk of subjection to inauthentic obligations. Second, the emphasis on the autonomy of the body could (and – to reverse the well-known Kantian implication – therefore should), be understood as a continuous extension of the autonomy of pure will.

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